

# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge Day 1: What is Mindful Eating?



Have you ever sat down to eat a snack or meal in front of the TV or your computer, finished your food then realized you didn't taste or enjoy what you ate? This is *mindless* eating!

Mindful eating is:

- eating with *intention* and *attention*;
- being fully present when eating, whether it is a snack or a meal;
- judgment and guilt free;
- how you appreciate nourishment and unique eating experiences.

**Putting it into practice:** Think of a recent time when you truly enjoyed a particular food or meal. **Write down what you enjoyed about that meal or food.** Was it the taste? The company? The setting? A pleasant memory? Something else?

Eaters Collective, <https://unsplash.com/photos/12eHC6FxPyg>

**Additional reading:** "What is mindful eating?" from the Center for Mindful Eating.

[https://www.thecenterformindfuleating.org/Resources/Documents/principles\\_handout\\_1\\_22.pdf](https://www.thecenterformindfuleating.org/Resources/Documents/principles_handout_1_22.pdf)

# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge Day 2: What is your eating style?

How do you know when it is time to eat?

How do you know when it is time to stop eating?

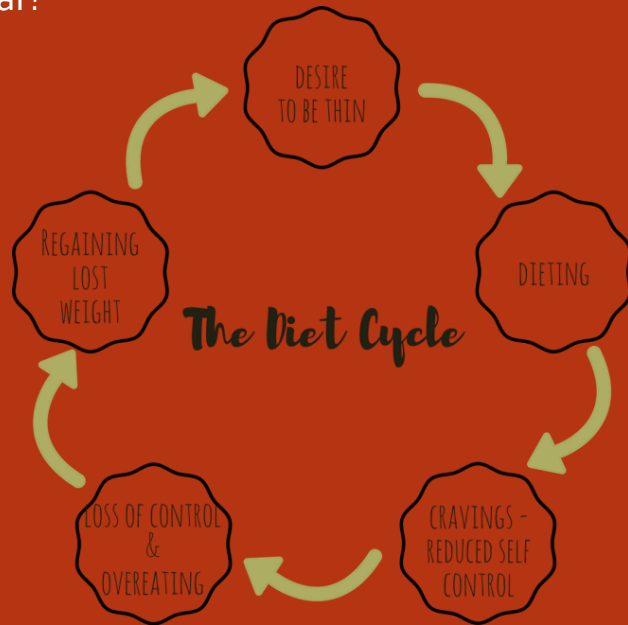
Take this 10 question mindful eating quiz to learn more about your eating style:

<http://eatingmindfully.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Mindful-Eating-Quiz.pdf>



**Putting it into practice:** Now that you have a better idea of your style, notice if there particular things you'd like to work on. Write at least one intention for yourself for this mindful eating challenge.

After years of dieting, it takes time to trust that your body can accurately signal hunger or fullness. But not trusting our bodies created a cycle of weight lost and regained, with a side of shame. What has dieting brought you? Does this cycle seem familiar?



Ask yourself :

- Do I feel satisfied and nourished? Hungry and deprived?
- How do my choices of what, when, and how to eat help me? Could my choices hurt me or limit my life?
- What could happen if I followed a new path – one that values my emotional and physical health above all else?

*What would it be like to take a risk on a new approach?*

## 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge: Day 3

# The Problem with Diets



**Putting it into practice:** Take it from a recovered yo-yo dieter, why we eat what we eat is not as simple as it would seem. List to physician Dr. Michelle May about her own story. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKIMGsxlmqo>

# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge Day 4: Eat when you're not hungry?



Why are you eating what you are eating?  
Watch for these common clues that may suggest you are eating emotionally:

- Specific cravings for foods that feel comforting or have a specific memory attached to them;
- Urgent hunger coming on suddenly;
- Eating past the point of fullness – maybe even to discomfort; or,
- Feeling guilt or shame when you're done eating.

Ali Inay, <https://unsplash.com/photos/y3aP9oo9Pjc>

**Additional reading:** "Get Stressed. Eat. Repeat." (page 7) from the Center for Mindful Eating.

[https://thecenterformindfuleating.org/resources/Documents/FFTNewsletter2017Spring\\_Emotions.pdf](https://thecenterformindfuleating.org/resources/Documents/FFTNewsletter2017Spring_Emotions.pdf)

# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge Day 5: I emotionally ate. Now what?

Instead of berating yourself for emotional or overeating, bring some self-compassion to the table:

1. Let your idea of 'healthy' eating be flexible and diverse – black and white thinking is rarely effective.
2. Notice what you say to yourself while you are eating.
3. Make a list of alternative statements to use when those critical thoughts begin.

Read more here: <https://www.mindful.org/self-compassion-the-often-missing-ingredient-in-healthy-eating/>



Broke Lark, <https://unsplash.com/photos/V4MBq8kue3U>

**Putting it into practice:** Look for other ways to cope other than food. Check out this blog for “10 Ways to Soothe Yourself Without Food:” <http://www.sheknows.com/health-and-wellness/articles/974151/10-ways-to-soothe-yourself-without-food>

# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge Day 6: Food allergies and intolerances

Joanie Simon, <https://unsplash.com/photos/2r8BzVYZleo>



Fueling our bodies can be difficult enough on a daily basis, let alone when your body has very specific needs.

Check out these resources to learn more about mindful and intuitive eating that may apply to you:

- Diabetes: [https://lindabacon.org/pdf/BaconMatz\\_Diabetes\\_EnjoyingFood.pdf](https://lindabacon.org/pdf/BaconMatz_Diabetes_EnjoyingFood.pdf)
- After weight loss surgery: <https://amihungry.com/programs/mindful-eating-for-bariatric-surgery/how-it-works/>
- Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) <https://player.fm/series/the-love-food-podcast-peace-from-emotional-eating-binge-eating-eating-disorders-and-negative-body-image-through-intuitive-eating-and-health-at-every-size-approaches/ep-045-does-intuitive-eating-really-work-with-a-chronic-illness>
- Celiac Disease <http://www.juliedillonrd.com/tag/celiac-disease/>
- Food allergies and sensitivities: <https://maddymoon.com/intuitively-eat-with-food-allergies/>

**Putting it into practice:** Whether or not your eating may be impacted by an illness listed above, consider how you can best nourish yourself with the resources available to you right now. Check out this blog post on writing your own care instructions for more help:

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/brook-packard/care-instructions\\_b\\_10220408.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/brook-packard/care-instructions_b_10220408.html)

# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge: Day 7

## Play with your food!

Brooke Lark, <https://unsplash.com/photos/aGjP08-HbYY>

Food can be fun and interesting! There are many colors, textures, and flavors to playfully explore.

Pay attention as you eat and notice how your body feels during and after the meal. Some foods may leave you feeling lethargic and uncomfortable. Others may leave you energized and full of life.

Notice how you feel and consider whether this is how you *want* to feel, and whether you would like to choose differently in the future.

*You are in charge of your eating and your health.*

*You decide what, when, and how to eat.*

How can you take care of your body, to meet its unique needs, with the resources you have available and brings you pleasure?



**Putting it into practice:** Choose one meal, and see how many varieties, colors, textures, and flavors of foods you can include. Notice how your meal is when you are curious and playful with your food – rather than concerned.

# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge Day 8: Making Choices

Herson Rodriguez, <https://unsplash.com/photos/aZOqcEK2KuQ>



New diet trends, 'super foods,' and 'right' ways to eat are shared every day. Many of these messages conflict, creating a minefield to navigate.

Let's keep it simple.

Dr. Michelle May, author of "Am I Hungry," shares three questions to ask ourselves before making food choices:

- **What do I *want*?** (What is it that I *really* want to eat?)
- **What do I *need*?** (Do I need to consider health conditions?)
- **What do I *have*?** (What kind of variety can I have to choose from?)

Read more here: <http://amihungry.com/pdf/consumed-newsletter-vol-ii-issue-5.pdf>

**Putting it into practice:** Use these questions to guide your food choices today. Notice whether you choose 'the usual' or make changes to your routine. Did your choices respect the unique needs of your body? If you could have this meal over again, would you make different choices? Do you feel how you want to feel?



# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge Day 9: Don't Hurry!

Mindful eating is also about enjoying your food.

Take your time and use your 5 senses:

Sight → How does it look on the plate?

Sound → What does it sound like as you chew it?

Scent → How does it smell?

Touch → What is its texture? How does it feel in your mouth?  
In your hand?

Taste → What is its flavor? Does it taste similar to anything else?



Brooke Lark, <https://unsplash.com/photos/nTZOILVZuOg>



**Putting it into practice:** Try this guided meditation practice using a common pantry item – the raisin. Explore a simple ingredient using all five of your senses. <https://soundcloud.com/tcme-org/mindful-eating-meditation-with-a-raisin>

# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge Day 10: Finding Your Focus

Katie Smith, <https://unsplash.com/photos/uQs1802D0CQ>

Consider your surroundings.

## Where are you?

- Are you eating at your desk while you work?
- Are you eating in the car on your way to a meeting?

## What else is happening around you?

- Is the television on?
- Are you celebrating a coworker's birthday with the rest of your team?

These are examples of distracted eating and can lead to eating beyond fullness and satisfaction.

## How could you support yourself in making effective choices in your eating?

- Could you minimize any of the chaos or noise?
- What nutrients do you need to feel energized and alert through the rest of your day? What foods will provide you this fuel?
- What mindfulness or meditation strategies could you use to feel more present and settled in this moment instead of worrying about the emails accumulating in your inbox or the next task on your to-do list?



**Putting it into practice:** It can be difficult to begin regularly using mindfulness at meal times, even after you are able to schedule time for a non-distracted meal. Use this 5 minute guide for help: <https://soundcloud.com/tcme-org/3-meal-re>

Infants are born eating only when they are hungry. We can lose the ability to pay attention to these cues due to medical conditions, stress, and being taught to clean our plates each meal.

Today when you sit down for a meal, consider how hungry you are before proceeding.

- 1: I am starving and feel weak.
2. I am very hungry and maybe feel cranky.
3. I feel hunger pangs.
4. I feel slightly hungry and know that I am about to be hungry.
5. I am comfortable. I could or could not eat and still feel ok.

Try beginning your meal when you are at 3 or 4. Notice how you feel, how you ate, and whether you would make a different choice in the future.



## 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge: Day 11

# Am I really hungry?

Freddie Marriage, <https://unsplash.com/photos/X9Za3VjKlGc>



**Putting it into practice:** As you consider just how hungry you are, be sure to consider how your emotions are playing into it – sometimes it is difficult to know the difference. Review this infographic to help:

<http://www.nutripri.com/uploads/9/8/3/2/98321516/editor/emotional-vs-physical-hunger-infographic.jpg?1488495449>

# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge: Day 12

## Am I satisfied? Or am I full?

Brooke Lark, <https://unsplash.com/photos/W9OKrxBqiZA>



How do you decide when you've had enough to eat?

External cues, like an empty plate or food container, may not match what our body needs in that moment.

Pause a few times as you eat today and notice how full or satisfied you feel:

6. I feel mostly satisfied but could eat a little more.
7. I am completely satisfied.
8. I am full and uncomfortable.
9. I am too full and very uncomfortable.
10. I feel sick I am so full. I feel nauseous and might even vomit.

Try ending your meal at 6 or 7. Notice how you feel, how you ate, and whether you begin to feel hungry quickly or whether you feel over full as time passes. Consider whether you would make a different choice in the future.

Joseph Gonzalez, <https://unsplash.com/photos/QaGDmf5tMiE>



**Putting it into practice:** Figuring out where hunger ends and fullness begins can be challenging. Check out this infographic about using the pause between bites to your advantage. <http://eatingmindfully.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/MindfulEatingGap.pdf>

Enjoyable physical activity is an important part of mindful and intuitive self-care. Movement improves stress levels, mood, quality of sleep, thinking, and attention.

Check in with yourself once an hour, noticing how you feel physically. Then, try moving in a way that best compliments how you feel.

Need some ideas?

1. Stand during a phone call.
2. Pause to gently roll your shoulders up, back, and down. Take any small movements that feel good to your neck.
3. Take a brief walk around your building – greet your coworkers as you stroll by (remember, relationships are an important piece of your physical and emotional well-being).
4. Reach toward the ceiling to release the tension and strain created by staying in one position or on your feet all day.
5. Laugh. A lot.



## 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge Day 13: Investing Your Energy

Bonnie Kittle, <https://unsplash.com/photos/xBFEnAMIFI>



**Putting it into practice:** Do you break out into a cold, anxious sweat when someone speaks the word 'exercise?' Use this worksheet to help you find movement you enjoy and would love to have in your life.

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58719c68e58c622f1600b20b/t/59757030e58c628c613bbfd8/1500868656568/Joyful\\_Movement.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58719c68e58c622f1600b20b/t/59757030e58c628c613bbfd8/1500868656568/Joyful_Movement.pdf)

# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge Day 14: Finding Joy in Movement

Robert Collins, <https://unsplash.com/photos/tvc5imO5pXk>



Look for activities that get you moving AND enrich your life. Doing things you love will bring more physical and emotional benefits.

- Meet up with your friends to be more active AND strengthen relationships at the same time. Make it a game by allowing a different friend to choose the form of movement each time - no limits or rules, no matter how silly you may feel!
- Volunteer! Animal shelters need help walking dogs and cleaning pens.
- Try a new fitness class at the YMCA, local gyms, and exercise studios. Be sure to ask your Human Resources officer about potential discounts.
- Walk around the neighborhood with your family, checking out home's unique decorations.

**Putting it into practice:** Using mindfulness during physical activity gives you the opportunity to not only enjoy the movement but also reduce your stress. Follow along with this guided walking meditation for a new twist on moving your body:

<https://www.mindful.org/the-mindful-practice-podcast-walking-meditation/>

# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge Day 15: Holiday Habits: Setting intentions

Patrick Fore, <https://unsplash.com/photos/hoxqcGUheeo>



Take a moment today to set 2 or 3 intentions for your holiday season. Consider how you would like to feel. Think about the meaning you would like this season to hold, such as community and connection, gratitude, presence rather than presents, or honoring family traditions.

Reflect back on these intentions as you decide what parties to attend, what foods to eat, or what trips to take. Ask yourself: will this choice help me reach my intentions for this season? Would another decision help me have the season I want?

Review this blog for more inspiration:

<https://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-22825/9-intentions-im-setting-this-holiday-season.html>

Chloe Benko-Prieur, <https://unsplash.com/photos/BJvZgl7p2mY>



**Putting it into practice:** Listen to this podcast for a Curvy Yoga practice for opening your heart, rather than disconnecting, during the holidays. [http://anna83508.podomatic.com/entry/2011-11-20T13\\_50\\_44-08\\_00](http://anna83508.podomatic.com/entry/2011-11-20T13_50_44-08_00)

# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge Day 16: Holiday Habits: Gratitude



To cultivate more gratitude and remind yourself when you begin to forget, create what dietician Rebecca Scritchfield calls a “Spiral Up” Jar.

Find a jar or container, scraps of paper, and something to write with. Spend 3 to 5 minutes writing one positive quote or something you feel grateful for on each piece of paper, or set a goal of completing one per day throughout the month.

Share these during your holiday meal or keep your jar within plain sight where you or your loved ones can take one when they start to feel anxious or frustrated.

**Optional activity:** A brief meditation for when you start to feel overwhelmed by preparations or agitated with grocery shopping for the big meal, reducing stress and returning to joy <https://soundcloud.com/lululemon-athletica-1/live-in-joy-meditation>



# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge Day 17: Holiday Habits: Feasting is about more than food

How could you prioritize relationships and gratitude this season?

Consider these ideas from dietician Rebecca Scritchfield :

- **Give to others** – find ways to share your food, time, and energy to a family in need or your community.
- **Pray before you eat** – ask someone at your table to offer a prayer, share a poem or book reading, acknowledge the energy and labor invested in creating the meal (including the cook, animals, Mother Earth, and your company), or a meaningful mantra to center hearts and minds.
- **Share gratitude** – if someone is struggling to identify a point of gratitude because the season feels hard, invite them to share a piece of inspiration they have found such as a quote, song lyric, or religious passage.
- **Go play** – lose yourself in the moment and let go of adult expectations. Take a walk, share some crafts, or just be silly.



+Simple, <https://unsplash.com/photos/NKJAaEGC-B4>

For more habits to create more presence and engagement at your gathering, reading this article from Anna Guest-Jelley, founder of Curvy Yoga: <https://www.huggermugger.com/blog/2011/yoga-for-stress/>

# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge Day 18: Holiday Habits: I ate too much!

Jennifer Pallian, <https://unsplash.com/photos/Z5tfVSjDelk>



It happens to all of us: we get lost in dinner conversation, reminiscing with loved ones, and attempting to navigate the complexity of family relationships. Before we know it, we have overeaten and did not even enjoy what we did eat.

Before the spiral of guilt and shame begin, consider Dr. Michelle May's tips on using mindfulness to respond differently including:

- Turn your 'mistake' into a learning experience.
- Notice when you feel hungry again and how it feels to eat.
- Don't beat yourself up.

Read more here: <https://amihungry.com/articles/what-to-do-when-you-overdo-it/>

Follow this brief (5 minute) self-compassion guided meditation if you feel bad after overeating: <http://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/self-compassion.break.mp3>

# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge Day 19: Holiday Habits: What am I going to do with all this food?

Brooke Lark, <https://unsplash.com/photos/M4E7X3z80PQ>

Is your refrigerator consumed with the food memories of a magnificent meal? Experts say the first step in negotiating leftovers is asking yourself a simple question: do I want to eat this food?

If the answer is “no, I don’t want to eat that right now,” get creative with your leftovers:

Who would want to eat or appreciate this food?

Can I use this ingredient to make something I would want to eat?

How could I freeze or preserve this food for future use?

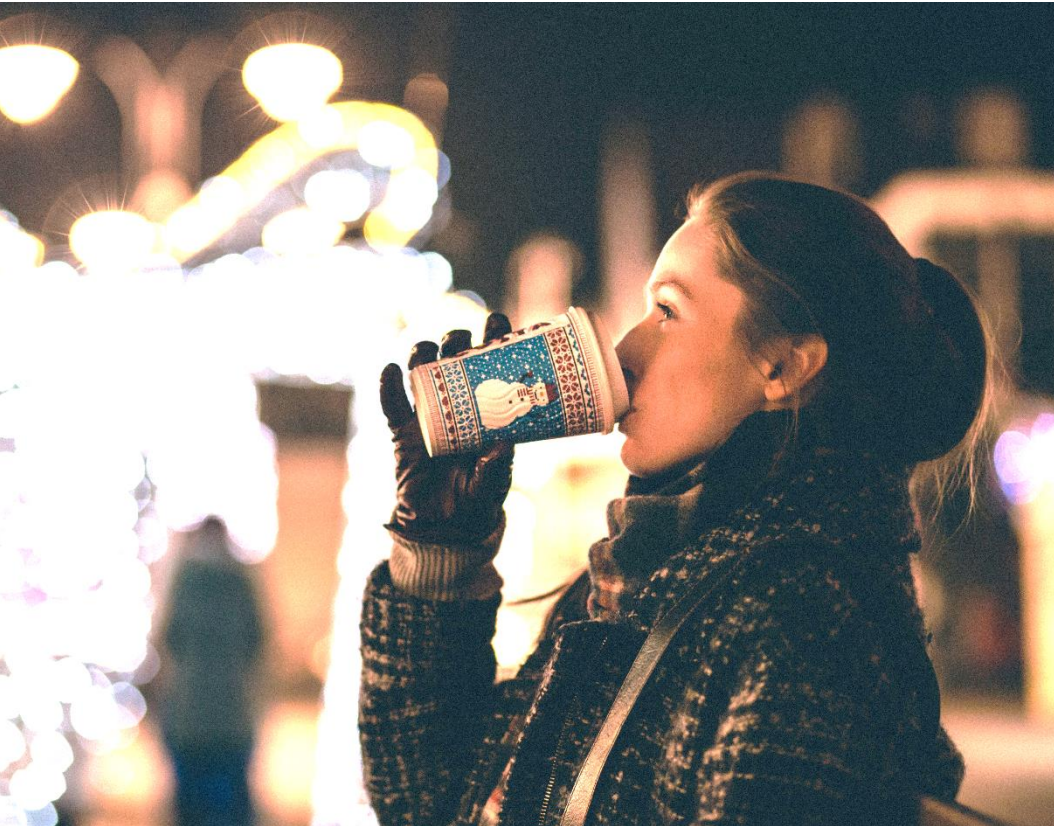
But remember: *you are under no obligation to eat any of the food.*



A practice to ‘surf the urge’ if you are struggling with being in charge of your eating this season: <https://player.fm/series/10-happier-with-dan-harris/guided-meditation-holiday-stress-surf-the-urge>

# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge Day 20: Holiday Habits: Checking in with yourself before you eat

Freestocks.org, <https://unsplash.com/photos/5UWVdeEAE3E>



Take a 5 minute break before a family gathering or meal for a simple restorative yoga pose (or another gentle stretch that feels right for you) to feel centered and refreshed.

Savor this time for yourself to be more present throughout your meal and aware of the sensations you need to eat mindfully.

Try Viparita Karani (Legs Up the Wall) for a simple yoga pose that can calm your nervous system, soothe headaches, and quiet the mind.

No wall available at work? Do the same pose, resting your calves on your office chair.

**Putting it into practice:** For more details and step by step instructions for Legs Up the Wall, review this brief article about the pose: <https://www.yogajournal.com/poses/legs-up-the-wall-pose>

# 21-Day Mindful Eating Challenge Day 21: Holiday Habits: Eating with family & friends

Holiday gatherings can be a confusing combination of joy and minefields. Set a goal to keep your focus on peace.

- Savor each bite, releasing judgment as well as the unhelpful commentary from others at the table.
- Enjoy second helpings, pumpkin pie for breakfast, and sleeping until noon.
- Let go of the responsibility for making others happy.
- Say no, kindly and compassionately, as often as necessary.
- Honor your hunger and your fullness.
- Invest in your well-being, prioritizing self-care that will support you.

*Remember: You are the expert in your body.* No one else on this planet has the wisdom and skills to remain attuned to a meet your needs in each moment.

**Give yourself permission to be authentically, to have non-judgmental awareness of your physical and emotional experiences, and that in this moment (just as always) you are doing the best you can.**



Annie Gray, <https://unsplash.com/photos/gcWNzP3vKb0>

Putting it into practice: use this meditation when you feel strong or difficult emotions around eating or other holiday activities:

<http://self-compassion.org/wptest/wp-content/uploads/soften,soothe,allow.MP3>